



Transportation Advisory Committee.

Date: March 14, 2024.

Time: 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM.

Location: Conducted via Remote Participation (Zoom).

Minutes

1. Administration.

Members in Attendance: John Alessi (DPCD), John Aslanian, Bill Copithorne (DPW), Lenard Diggins, Melissa Laube, Jeff Maxtutis, Ofer Mazor, Corey Rateau (APD), Scott Smith, James Stubbe, Laura Swan (Chair), and Shoji Takahashi.

Members Absent: Beth Benedikt and Kenny Fennell.

Members of Public in Attendance: Vincent Baudoin, Phil Goff, Paul Schlichtman, Petru Sofio, and Joe Solomon.

The Chair provided notice regarding Remotely Conducted Meetings, referring the members to the agenda attachment entitled “Governor Charles Baker’s 3/12/2020 Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law”. The Chair reviewed the meeting ground rules and announced that the meeting was being recorded.

B. Approval of February 7, 2024 Meeting Notes.

Minutes for the Meeting were approved.

C. Correspondence Sent/Received from February 3 to March 8, 2024.

No correspondence was sent or received during this time period.

2. Public Comments (for information only, not for action).

No public comments were made this meeting.

3. Town Issues/Activities (not already on the agenda).

A. Update from the Department of Planning and Community Development (John Alessi, DPCD).

Mystic River Path and Bikeway Connector: The Town has released a request for proposal (RFP) for the design of the Mystic River Path Connection to the Minuteman Bikeway following a feasibility study completed in 2022. This project will include a 1.7-mile continuous, accessible shared-use path connecting the Minuteman Bikeway to the Alewife Brook Greenway via the Mystic Valley Parkway Corridor. The goal is to have a consultant on board late summer/early fall. The project must follow MassDOT's project development and design guidelines, so it is likely construction will not begin for several years. The Town received \$1 million for the design phase as part of the federal FY2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act. Public outreach is planned, and the Town will provide additional information after the consultant has been hired.

Toolkit for Traffic Calming and Prioritization: The scope of work for an RFP is being drafted.

CPA Grant: DPCD received a CPA grant to redesign the intersection of the Minuteman Bikeway, Ed Burns Arena, and Ryder St, including a splitter island, wayside areas, and widening of the Bikeway where feasible. Work is scheduled to start at the beginning of the new fiscal year, July 1, after Town Meeting votes to approve the funds. In addition, the Parks Department Director, Joe Connelly, is working on a redesign of the Ed Burns Arena parking lot which will include designing a shared-use path from Summer St to the Bikeway.

Motorists Give 4 Ft to Pass Signs: The Town is awaiting MassDOT's response on its request for these signs.

B. Update from the Department of Public Works (Bill Copithorne, DPW).

Construction season has started.

Marathon St and Waldo Rd: "Cross traffic does not stop" placard will be placed on westbound Waldo Rd stop sign to match the one on the eastbound side.

Roadway striping Medford St, Warren St: contractor will begin when the temperatures are consistently above 50° F.

C. Update from the Police Department (Corey Rateau, APD).

Parking enforcement: The Town is switching software and handheld devices to a different vendor for parking.

MBTA: In April, MBTA will be rerouting buses off Mass Ave between Mt Vernon and Arlington Center as a practice run for the 250-year Anniversary of the beginning of the American Revolution in 2025.

4. Pedestrian Flags.

Jim Stubbe checked on the condition of pedestrian flags and canisters at all locations throughout the Town. He replaced or restocked ~30 pedestrian flags, and there are ~100 flags remaining in the stock.

5. Update: Park Ave Corridor.

Melissa Laube and Jeff Maxtutis will continue in the Working Group. Citizens are scheduling a walking audit of the corridor looking at it from the perspective of bicyclists and pedestrians. The walking audit will be in April or May when the weather is warmer.

6. Vote: Highland and High Haith.

Laura Swan presented the Working Group Memo and its recommendations. Scott Smith and Bill Copithorne commented that curb ramps will need to-be upgraded with ADA-detectable pads, which will require that concrete sidewalks be replaced.

Corey Rateau said that the Town now mandates high-visibility retroreflective front-and-back crossing signs at crosswalks. For the northbound approach, he does not recommend moving the advance pedestrian warning sign. Such signs should be ~100' from the crossing, and he recommends moving it closer to the crosswalk in order to improve its visibility.

A motion to send the Memo to the Select Board was made subject to modifying the recommendations as follows: (1) deleting the recommendation “Move the Northbound advance warning sign a few feet south before the utility pole”; and (2) changing “Consider adding ADA detectable pads to the handicap ramps” to “Add ADA-detectable pads to the handicap ramps”.

The motion passed unanimously.

7. Update: Wachusett Ave and Appleton St.

Jeff Maxtutis received turning-movement counts from a contractor and performed capacity analysis to test the eastbound Wachusett Ave approach with a stop sign. The results showed little additional delay or queuing under an all-way stop

condition. This information and analysis will be added to the Working Group Memo for voting at the next TAC Meeting.

8. Discussion: Special Speed Regulations (SSR) Working Group.

Jim Stubbe presented slides from the Working Group and then took questions and comments.

Corey Rateau said that MassDOT does not recommend removing SSRs as setting speed limits requires speed studies. Removing SSRs town wide does not make sense as not every street is the same. If the 85th percentile is not within 5 mph, then the location will require traffic-calming (engineering) solutions. First implement engineering changes to change driver behavior. Speed limits are often set by political considerations instead of design considerations; drivers will not necessarily abide by the posted limits.

Jeff Maxtutis said that he prefers an incremental approach, e.g., start with rescinding the SSRs on Park Ave and Broadway. The Town should consider conducting speed studies before and after the change to see it impacts driver behavior.

Scott Smith also favors an incremental approach with data collection. Speed studies can inform the Town about areas that might be dangerous, and the existing ones are dated. Simplifying the speed limit to a Town wide 25 mph limit could reduce driver confusion.

Len Diggins said that reducing driver confusion on streets with changing speed limits such as Summer St and Park Ave is a reason to rescind SSRs. He continued that simplifying speed limits to 25 mph would be first step and the Town will need to prioritize for traffic calming on roads that require it. Safety is an important part of the decision to remove SSRs.

Bill Copithorne agreed that engineering design is needed to improve safety, and he does not think that rescinding SSRs will help. He emphasized that built neighborhoods impose design challenges, and engineering changes will take a significant amount of time (perhaps a decade or more) to implement.

John Alessi responded that the Working Group recognizes that speed limit changes alone are unlikely to change driver behavior. In his discussion with area municipalities, they noted reducing speed limits was a policy decision having symbolic importance: support for slower speeds and Vision Zero.

Laura Swan concurred that rescinding the SSRs will set the Town goal for design intent. She also favored speed studies as the data could show what happens to driver behavior with changes in speed limit followed by traffic calming, and it might guide future decisions.

Vincent Baudoin commented that policy should drive engineering design. He noted that the MUTCD revised in December 2023 says that the 85th percentile should not be the sole consideration in setting speed limits. Other factors, such as pedestrian and bicycle safety, should also be considered.

Phil Goff also favors the simplicity of rescinding SSRs: less confusion for drivers. He added that 30 mph zones on Lake Ave and Broadway seem to encourage driver speeding despite having the street context of a 25 mph zone.

Joe Solomon voiced support for rescinding SSRs and obtaining speed data.

9. Adjourn.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm.